

Chicano Art in Watsonville

The Academia del Arte Chicano de Atzlan is the result of several people's dream of encouraging expression of the arts in the Watsonville community. The group, organized as a collective, began its program in October, 1975, funded by a grant obtained by the Museum Without Walls. This September it will become a self-sufficient collective.

The Academia's first year has been an exciting one. Events and exhibits centering on women have been a poetry reading by Chris Rodriguez and a chicana art show of works by Carmen Leon, Peggy Rosa, and Angelita Morales. A major on-going project is the creation of murals in the community, involving the cooperation of several of the collective's artists. The first one, at the Mona Lisa Restaurant in Watsonville, has been completed, and another, painted by Carmen Leon, will soon be finished at the Radcliff Bi-lingual School. Carmen is also involving the children of the school in painting a second mural.

Barbara Davis, facilitator of ADACDA, feels that art is essential to people's well being. Once someone has eaten and slept, there is a lot of energy to be expressed. Elements of the ancient Indian cultures have survived beyond the

conquistadores. The Academia hopes to bring this art and consciousness of Mexican culture to chicanos in Watsonville.

Muralist Carmen Leon said, "Historically, the Mexicans making the transition from Mexico to the United States have suppressed their language and culture. The Academia del Arte is committed to reversing that process."

ADACDA will soon begin offering classes and is encouraging members of the community to come and use their space. A workshop on "Women and Health" is being planned along with art classes in photography, silk screening, and pottery. A beginning drawing class started April 6. Carmen Leon hopes that women who have never experienced art will become involved in the classes and wants to reach out to las mujeres in the community who might not attempt drawing or painting in a formal school outside of Watsonville.

Currently, the gallery at the Academia is presenting an exhibit of children's art and is open daily except Wednesday and Sunday.

The Academia del Arte Chicano de Atzlan is located at 19 East Lake, Watsonville. For more information about exhibits and classes call Barbara Davis at 728-1466.

by Elise Levinson

